

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EB-07 DHA-02 ORM-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /085 W
-----075720 152034Z /65

R 151400Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0231
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NY

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E.9. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF BC RH ZA
SUBJ: CHARTER FLIGHTS AND REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA

REF: (A) GABORONE 1432, (B) GABORONE 1536

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCE, AIRPLANES WHICH HAVE BEEN CHARTERING RHODESIAN GUERRILLAS FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA, AND WHICH HAVE CAUSED RECENT FUROR IN SOUTH AFRICAN AND RHODESIAN PRESS, ARE RHODESIAN-OWNED. END SUMMARY.

2. AT SMALL FAREWELL FUNCTION AT RESIDENCE JULY 13, DEPARTING AMCIT DIRECTOR OF BOTSWANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, RALPH STEVENS, WITH SEVERAL RANKING GOB OFFICIALS NODDING AGREEMENT, TOLD US "ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS" THAT AFFAIR OF SO-CALLED "MYSTERY PLANES" FLYING RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA FOR GUERRILLA TRAINING WAS FRAUGHT WITH "IRONY". IN TRUTH, THE PLANES (THERE ARE TWO VISCOUNTS, ONE ONE) ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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OWNED BY A RHODESIAN FINANCE COMPANY AND SERVICED AT SALISBURY. HOWEVER, A COMPLICATED SYSTEM OF LEASING ARRANGEMENTS INVOLVING EIGHT PARTIES EXISTED TO COVER UP THIS RHODESIAN CONNECTION. (LINKS LEAD FROM THE RHODESIAN OWNER THROUGH "AVIATION HIRE AND TRADERS" OF JOHANNESBURG TO AIR SERVICES BOTSWANA.) THE ORIGINAL CONCERN IN THE ARRANGEMENT WAS NOT THAT THE RHODESIANS OR THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD BE EMBARRASSED BY

REVELATIONS, SUCH AS THOSE MADE IN RECENT RAND DAILY MAIL ARTICLES (ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY ARE EMBARRASSED), BUT THAT THE ZAMBIAWS WOULD BE OFFENDED BY DEPENDENCE ON RHODESIAN-OWNED AIRCRAFT IN MAKING THE REFUGEE RUN TO LUSAKA AND WOULD HALT THE FLIGHTS.

3. STEVENS THOUGHT THE RAND DAILY MAIL "EXPOSURES" WOULD RESULT IN DISCONTINUANCE OF THE FLIGHTS INASMUCH AS SALISBURY, THE ONLY SERVICING POINT FOR VISCOUNTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WOULD NOT FIND IT POLITICALLY FEASIBLE TO PROVIDE PLANES (AND SERVICES) FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

4. STEVENS DID NOT SUGGEST ALTERNATIVE MEASURES WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN TO MAINTAIN THE REFUGEE AIR LINK BETWEEN SELEBI-PIKWE AND LUSAKA. NEVERTHELESS, HE CONSIDERED THE MATTER LESS PRESSING NOW SINCE THE NUMBER OF ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEES HAD DECLINED IN PAST WEEKS AND BOTSWANA REFUGEE CAMPS WERE NO LONGER CROWDED. HE SPECULATED THAT THE DECLINE OF REFUGEE INFLOWS WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT ZAMBIAW CAMPS AND OTHER REFUGEE FACILITIES WERE FULL AND THAT WOULD-BE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WERE BEING INSTRUCTED BY PATRIOTIC FRONT RECRUITERS TO STAY IN RHODESIA.

5. COMMENT: AS OF JULY 15, FLIGHTS BY RHODESIAN-OWNED AIRCRAFT CARRYING RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA WERE STILL OPERATING, A POINT CONFIRMED BY GOB AND UNHCR REP PERKINS.

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OFFICIAL AT PRESIDENCY ADDED THAT MOST RECENT FLIGHT WAS JULY 11. HE SAID NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WERE BUILDING UP AGAIN IN RECENT DAYS, ALTHOUGH STILL AT RELATIVELY LOW LEVELS, I.E., AS OF JULY 14, NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN FRANCISTOWN WAS 627; SELEBI-PIKWE 606, WITH GABORONE CONSTANT AT 1000 TO 1200.

NORLAND

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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